

Message Text

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SUBJ: THAI NEWSPAPERS ON NARCOTICS

FOR IEA, IPS, STATE FOR EA AND S/NM

EDITORIALS AND COLUMNS ON NARCOTICS HAVE BECOME A REGULAR FEATURE OF BANGKOK NEWSPAPERS SINCE PRIME MINISTER TANIN KRAIVIXIEN OCTOBER 17 PROCLAIMED NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION AS A THAI GOVERNMENT PRIORITY POLICY. WRITERS HAVE POINTED OUT THE DANGER OF NARCOTICS TO THAI SOCIETY, THE DAMAGE THAILAND'S REPUTATION SUFFERS FROM BEING A MAIN CHANNEL FOR NARCOTICS, AND THE NEED FOR STRONGER PENALTIES FOR DRUG OFFENDERS. THE FULL TEXT OF THE MOST RECENT NARCOTICS COLUMN, BY CHAL HANU WRITING NOVEMBER 24 IN DAILY NEWS, THAILAND'S SECOND-LARGEST CIRCULATION THAI-LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER, FOLLOWS.

(BEGIN TEXT)

AFTER I WROTE ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF DRUG ADDICTS IN THIS COLUMN, I RECEIVED MANY LETTERS OF SUPPORT FROM READERS SHOWING THAT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO SUPPRESS HEROIN PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING ARE OVERWHELMINGLY APPROVED BY THE PEOPLE.

NARCOTICS NOT ONLY ENDANGER THE HEALTH OF THAI ADDICTS,

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BUT THEY WEAKEN THAI SOCIETY; THEREFORE, IF THAILAND STILL

CONTINUES BEING THE SOURCES OF PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING IN DANGEROUS DRUGS FOR CONSUMERS ABROAD, WE WILL BE PUT TO SHAME.

RELIABLE SOURCES SAY NARCOTICS ARE EXPORTED FROM THAILAND, OR MORE CORRECTLY, FROM THE "GOLDEN TRIANGLE," AN AREA BORDERING NORTH THAILAND, BURMA, AND LAOS, TO THE U.S. ORIGINALLY, DRUGS WERE SMUGGLED TO THE U.S. FROM TURKEY BY THE SO - CALL " FRENCH CONNECTION" GROUP, BUT ITS ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES WERE HALTED LATER WHEN DRASTIC SUPPRESSION WAS JOINTLY CARRIED ON BY THE U.S. AND TURKEY. THAT GROUP OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS THEN TURNED TO A NEW DRUG SOURCE FROM THE "GOLDEN TRIANGLE" INSTEAD, THIS IS THE REASON THAT THE U.S. IS PROVIDING MORE AID AND CLOSER COOPERATION TO THAILAND IN DRUG SUPPRESSION.

AMERICA CALLS THE GROUP WHICH IS TRAFFICKING DRUGS FROM THAILAND THE "CHINESE CONNECTION."

ACCORDING TO DATA REPORTED BY AMERICAN AUTHORITIES, THE UNDERGROUND "CHINESE CONNECTION" TRANSPORTS 700 TONS OF RAW OPIUM A YEAR FROM THE "GOLDEN TRIANGLE", AND THEN IT IS CHEMICALLY CONVERTED TO HEROIN FOR EXPORT TO THE U.S. AND EUROPE. THIS GANG OPERATES LIKE A NETWORK UNDER AN INFLUENTIAL CHINESE NAMED "TSAI SHO", WHO LIVES IN A SOUTHERN CHINESE PROVINCE. HIS MEN ARE CHINESE WHO ARE RESIDENTS IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES.

ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF THE HEROIN PRODUCED IS TRANSPORTED FROM CHIANG MAI TO BANGKOK, AND THEN SMUGGLED TO ASIA, AMERICA, AND EUROPE, BY AIR AND BY SEA, WHILE SOME OF IT IS SMUGGLED BY CAR TO MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE. THE HEROIN IS CAREFULLY PACKED IN PLASTIC BAGS, WITH TRADE MARKS INDICATING THEIR QUALITY. THE NO. 4 HEROIN, IN PACKAGES WITH THE TRADE MARK "W. GLOBE" AND THE PICTURE OF TWO LIONS CARRYING A GLOBE IN A BAG, AS WELL AS THE WORDS "100 PERCENT QUALITY RECOMMENDED," IS VERY POPULAR IN EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN DRUG MARKETS. IT IS REPORTED THAT ABOUT 96-98 PERCENT OF PURE OPIUM IS THE MAIN INGREDIENT OF THE NO.4 HEROIN. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE OTHER TRADE MARKS SUCH AS THE PANDA BEAR, OPIUM PIPE, LION, AND DEER, WHICH ARE ALSO RESPECTIVELY POPULAR.

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THE "CHINESE CONNECTION" HAS SET UP ITS NETWORK THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, AND IT IS APT TO USE TRICKS AND RUSES SUCH AS BY MAKING ACQUAINTANCES WITH TOURISTS TO USE THEM AS COURIERS, WHO THEN BECOME THEIR SCAPEGOATS IN THE END. THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT, HOWEVER, PREFERS TO HIRE THAIS, "FARANGS", AND CHINESE, AS THEIR COURIERS, PAYING THEM 20,000 BAHT PER TRIP. IT WILLINGLY SPENDS A LOT OF MONEY FOR BRIBES TO AUTHORITIES. MUCH OF ITS WORK IS STILL A SECRET.

THE ABOVE INFORMATION MAKES ME WORRY WHETHER DRUG SUPPRESSION PROMISED BY THE TANIN GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS. FURTHERMORE, SOME BIG MERCHANTS IN THAILAND MAY BE SECRETLY BACKING THE "CHINESE CONNECTION", AND IT IS GENERALLY KNOWN THAT MERCHANTS WHO WANT TO BECOME WEALTHY FAST PREFER TO BRIBE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THEREFORE, IF THE LATTER ACCEPT BRIBES, IT WILL BE MOST DIFFICULT FOR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION EFFORTS TO PRODUCE RESULTS.

A READER SAID IN HIS LETTER: "WHEN A RELATIVE OF MINE WENT TO THE THANYA HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT, HE FOUND THAT NARCOTICS WERE SOLD THERE. IN ADDITION, DRUGS ARE ALSO SOLD IN THE KLONG PREM AND LARD YAO PRISONS, AND NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING IS ON A LARGE SCALE. DRUG TRAFFICKERS HAVE BODYGUARDS TO PROTECT THEM IN PRISONS. HOW CAN DRUG SUPPRESSION BE CARRIED OUT IN EARNEST IF DRUGS ARE SOLD EVEN IN PRISONS? SO HOW CAN THE REFORM GOVERNMENT BE EXPECTED TO COPE WITH DRUG TRAFFICKERS OUTSIDE PRISONS?"

I WONDER A LOT*

(END TEXT)
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